

a first secure container containing an audio file, the first  
secure container having associated a second rule,  
the second rule governing, at least in part, access  
to or other use of at least a portion of the audio  
file;

hardware and/or software used for receiving and opening  
secure containers, said secure containers each including  
the capacity to contain at least one governed item, at  
least one rule being associated with each of said secure  
containers;

a protected processing environment at least in part protecting at  
least some information contained in said protected processing  
environment from tampering by a user of said first apparatus,  
said protected processing environment including hardware  
and/or software used for applying said first rule and said second  
rule in combination to at least in part govern at least one aspect  
of access to or use of said audio file; and

hardware and/or software used for transmission of secure  
containers to other apparatuses and/or for the receipt of secure  
containers from other apparatuses.

8. A system as in Claim 7, said first apparatus further including:  
a secure database.

9. A system as in Claim 8 said first apparatus further including:  
a rights operating system.
10. A system as in Claim 9, said first apparatus further including:  
node initialization hardware and/or software.
11. A system as in Claim 7, in which said first apparatus memory includes  
at least one rule associated with a group of users.
12. A system as in Claim 7, said first apparatus further including a card  
reader.
13. A system as in Claim 7, said first apparatus comprising a kiosk, said  
kiosk further including:  
a document reader;  
a camera;  
a microphone; and  
a speaker.
14. A system as in Claim 7, said first apparatus comprising a television  
set-top box.
15. A system as in Claim 7, said first apparatus comprising a network  
electronic delivery server.

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16. A system as in Claim 7, said second rule at least in part governing the ability of a user of said first apparatus to transmit said audio file to a second apparatus.
17. A system as in Claim 16, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part governing the ability of a user to alter at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.
18. A system as in Claim 16, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part restricting the number of accesses and/or uses a user may make of at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.
19. A system as in Claim 16, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part restricting the duration of at least some accesses and/or uses of said audio file.
20. A system as in Claim 7, said memory further storing audit information.
21. A system as in Claim 20, said audit information being stored in a second secure container.
22. A system as in Claim 7, said memory further storing at least one routing slip.
23. A system as in Claim 22, said routing slip including:

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information relating to identification of at least one recipient of at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.

24. A system as in Claim 23, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part authorizing or allowing at least one action based at least in part on said routing slip identification information.
25. A system as in Claim 24, said at least one action including transmitting at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container to another apparatus and/or another user, said authorization of said transmission by said third rule being at least in part based on the identity of at least one prior recipient of said first secure container contents.
26. A system as in Claim 7, said first secure container having been received from a second apparatus and said second rule having been received from a third apparatus different from said second apparatus.
27. A system as in Claim 7, said memory further storing at least one audit trail record.
28. A system as in Claim 27, said audit trail record including information regarding the manner in which said first secure container and/or contents of said first secure container has been used.

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29. A system as in Claim 7, said first apparatus including a signature apparatus, said signature apparatus including signature affixation hardware and/or software.
30. A system as in Claim 7, said first apparatus further including user authentication hardware and/or software.
31. A system as in Claim 30, said user authentication hardware and/or software including biometric authentication hardware and/or software.
32. A system as in Claim 31, said biometric authentication hardware and/or software including hardware and/or software which analyzes palm prints, signatures, voices, fingerprints, retinas, irises and/or faces.
33. A system as in Claim 30, said user authentication hardware and/or software further including at least one secure identity token.
34. A system as in Claim 7, said memory storing a digital certificate.
35. A system as in Claim 34, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of at least one individual.
36. A system as in Claim 34, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of at least one group.

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37. A system as in Claim 34, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of said first apparatus.
38. A system as in Claim 34, said digital certificate including biometric information related to the identification of at least one individual.
39. A system as in Claim 34, said digital certificate being stored in a second secure container, said second secure container being stored in said memory.
40. A system as in Claim 39, said memory storing one or more rules associated with said second secure container, said second secure container rules at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital certificate.
41. A system as in Claim 34, said digital certificate being stored in said first secure container.
42. A system as in Claim 7, said memory storing at least one digital signature.
43. A system as in Claim 42, said digital signature being stored in a secure container.
44. A system as in Claim 43, said secure container including at least one cryptographic key.

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45. A system as in Claim 44, said secure container in which said digital signature is stored being a second secure container, different from said first secure container.
46. A system as in Claim 45, said memory storing at least one rule at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital signature.
47. A system as in Claim 7, said memory storing at least one electronic seal.
48. A system as in Claim 47, said electronic seal including a digital representation of a handwritten signature.
49. A system as in Claim 47, said electronic seal including receipt information.
50. A system as in Claim 47, said electronic seal including usage information.
51. A system as in Claim 50, said usage information including information at least in part identifying usage of said audio file.
52. A system as in Claim 47, said electronic seal including at least one image designed to allow for visual recognition of said seal.

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53. A system as in Claim 47, said seal including encoded information.
54. A system as in Claim 53, said encoded information being steganographically encoded in said seal.
55. A system as in Claim 47, said electronic seal including a digital signature.
56. A system as in Claim 47, said electronic seal including validation information.
57. A system as in Claim 47, said electronic seal including information regarding at least one transmission of said first secure container.
58. A system as in Claim 57, said transmission information including information regarding the transmitter of said first secure container.
59. A system as in Claim 47, said electronic seal including at least one rule.
60. A system as in Claim 59, said at least one electronic seal rule governing, at least in part, at least one aspect of access to or use of said first secure container contents.

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61. A system as in Claim 47, said electronic seal including a representation of at least one aspect of said first secure container contents.
62. A system as in Claim 61, said representation including a hash of at least a portion of said first secure container contents.
63. A system as in Claim 62, said hash constituting a hash of at least a portion of said audio file after normalization of said portion.
64. A system as in Claim 62, said electronic seal further including a time value.
65. A system as in Claim 62, said electronic seal further including a certificate value obtained from a digital certificate.
66. A system as in Claim 47, said electronic seal including encrypted information.
67. A system as in Claim 66, said encrypted information being encrypted, at least in part, using a key from a public/private key pair.
68. A system as in Claim 67, said encryption key belonging to at least one individual or entity responsible at least in part for at least one transmission of said audio file.

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77. A system as in Claim 76, said electronic fingerprint being stored in a secure container.
78. A system as in Claim 77, said secure container in which said electronic fingerprint is stored being a second secure container, different from said first secure container.
79. A system as in Claim 7, said first secure container containing at least one digital signature.
80. A system as in Claim 79, said memory storing at least one rule at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital signature.
81. A system as in Claim 7, said audio file including steganographically encoded information.
82. A system as in Claim 81, said steganographically encoded information including at least one electronic fingerprint.
83. A system as in Claim 81, said steganographically encoded information including a first portion encoded using a first steganographic encoding technique and a second portion encoded using a second steganographic encoding technique.

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84. A system as in Claim 83, in which said first steganographic encoding technique provides a higher degree of security than said second steganographic encoding technique.
85. A system as in Claim 84, in which at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information is encrypted.
86. A system as in Claim 83, in which said first portion is encrypted using a first technique which differs in at least one respect from a second encryption technique used for encryption of said second portion.
87. A system as in Claim 86, in which said encryption techniques differ in at least the key used for each technique.
88. A system as in Claim 86, in which said encryption techniques differ in the strength of encryption used.
89. A system as in Claim 81, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in spacings between words or characters, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.
90. A system as in Claim 81, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in spacings between lines of text, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.

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91. A system as in Claim 81, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in the gray scale used in at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.
92. A system as in Claim 81, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in the color frequencies used in at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.
93. A system as in Claim 7, said system further including:
- a second apparatus, said second apparatus including
  - user controls,
  - a communications port,
  - a processor,
  - a memory containing a third rule,
  - hardware and or/software used for receiving and opening secure containers, said secure containers each including the capacity to contain at least one governed item;
  - at least one rule being associated with each of said secure containers;

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a protected processing environment at least in part protecting at least some information contained in said protected processing environment from tampering by a user of said apparatus, said protected processing environment including hardware and/or software used for applying said third rule and rules associated with secure containers in combination to at least in part govern at least one aspect of access to or use of said governed item; and

hardware and/or software used for transmission of secure containers to other apparatuses and/or for the receipt of secure containers from other apparatuses.

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94. A system as in Claim 93, said system further including at least one electronic intermediary.
95. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary residing at said first apparatus.
96. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary being distributed between at least two locations, said two locations comprising said first apparatus and said second apparatus.
97. A system as in Claim 95, said first apparatus including a communications server at least in part facilitating communications between an internal network and a public network.

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98. A system as in Claim 97, wherein said public network constitutes the internet.
99. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary constituting at least a portion of an apparatus operated by a communications service provider.
100. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including digital signature hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow application of a digital signature to an item.
101. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including hash hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow calculation of a hash value based on an item.
102. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including electronic seal hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow application of a electronic seal to an item.
103. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including audit trail hardware and/or software operatively connected to record and store audit information relating to an item.
104. A system as in Claim 103, in which said intermediary audit information includes information regarding at least one transmission of said item.

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105. A system as in Claim 103, in which said intermediary audit information includes information regarding at least one access to said item.
106. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including time stamp hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide time information.
107. A system as in Claim 106, said intermediary including time certification hardware and/or software operatively connected to said time stamp hardware and/or software, said time certification including certification of time of transmission, receipt and/or use of an item.
108. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including auditing hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide auditing services.
109. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including authentication hardware and/or software.
110. A system as in Claim 109, in which said authentication hardware and/or software is operatively connected to at least in part authenticate governed items.
111. A system as in Claim 109, in which said authentication hardware and/or software is operatively connected to at least in part authenticate a sender of a governed item and/or a site responsible for sending a governed item.

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112. A system as in Claim 109, in which said authentication hardware and/or software is operatively connected to at least in part authenticate a recipient of a governed item and/or a site at which a governed item is received.
113. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including auction hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide electronic auction services.
114. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including transaction clearing hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide services relating to clearing transactions.
115. A system as in Claim 114, said transaction clearing services including payment-related services.
116. A system as in Claim 115, said transaction clearing services including audit-related services.
117. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including certification hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide certification services.
118. A system as in Claim 117, said certification services including the creation of digital certificates.

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119. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including currency hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide currency-related services.
120. A system as in Claim 119, said currency-related services including currency conversion.
121. A system as in Claim 94, said intermediary including a secure archive.
122. A system as in Claim 121, said secure archive including receipt-related information.
123. A system as in Claim 121, said secure archive including information about transmissions of one or more items.
124. A system as in Claim 121, said secure archive including identification information relating to one or more items.
125. A system as in Claim 121, said secure archive including authentication information relating to one or more items.
126. A system as in Claim 121, said secure archive authentication information including at least one hash value of at least a portion of an item.

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a first rule, and

a first secure container containing a video file, the first secure container having associated a second rule, the second rule governing, at least in part, access to or other use of at least a portion of the video file;

hardware and/or software used for receiving and opening secure containers, said secure containers each including the capacity to contain at least one governed item, at least one rule being associated with each of said secure containers;

a protected processing environment at least in part protecting at least some information contained in said protected processing environment from tampering by a user of said first apparatus, said protected processing environment including hardware and/or software used for applying said first rule and said second rule in combination to at least in part govern at least one aspect of access to or use of said video file; and

hardware and/or software used for transmission of secure containers to other apparatuses and/or for the receipt of secure containers from other apparatuses.

134. A system as in Claim 133, said first apparatus further including:  
a secure database.

135. A system as in Claim 134, said first apparatus further including:

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a rights operating system.

136. A system as in Claim 135, said first apparatus further including:  
node initialization hardware and/or software.
137. A system as in Claim 133, in which said first apparatus memory  
includes at least one rule associated with a group of users.
138. A system as in Claim 133, said first apparatus further including a card  
reader.
139. A system as in Claim 133, said first apparatus comprising a kiosk, said  
kiosk further including:  
a document reader;  
a camera;  
a microphone; and  
a speaker.
140. A system as in Claim 133, said first apparatus comprising a television  
set-top box.
141. A system as in Claim 133, said first apparatus comprising a network  
electronic delivery server.

142. A system as in Claim 133, said second rule at least in part governing the ability of a user of said first apparatus to transmit said video file to a second apparatus.
143. A system as in Claim 147, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part governing the ability of a user to alter at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.
144. A system as in Claim 147, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part restricting the number of accesses and/or uses a user may make of at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.
145. A system as in Claim 147, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part restricting the duration of at least some accesses and/or uses of said video file.
146. A system as in Claim 133, said memory further storing audit information.
147. A system as in Claim 146, said audit information being stored in a second secure container.
148. A system as in Claim 133, said memory further storing at least one routing slip.

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149. A system as in Claim 148, said routing slip including:  
information relating to identification of at least one recipient of at least  
a portion of the contents of said first secure container.
150. A system as in Claim 149, said first secure container having  
associated a third rule at least in part authorizing or allowing at least  
one action based at least in part on said routing slip identification  
information.
151. A system as in Claim 150, said at least one action including  
transmitting at least a portion of the contents of said first secure  
container to another apparatus and/or another user, said authorization  
of said transmission by said third rule being at least in part based on  
the identity of at least one prior recipient of said first secure container  
contents.
152. A system as in Claim 133, said first secure container having been  
received from a second apparatus and said second rule having been  
received from a third apparatus different from said second apparatus.
153. A system as in Claim 133, said memory further storing at least one  
audit trail record.
154. A system as in Claim 153, said audit trail record including information  
regarding the manner in which said first secure container and/or  
contents of said first secure container has been used.

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155. A system as in Claim 133, said first apparatus including a signature apparatus, said signature apparatus including signature affixation hardware and/or software.
156. A system as in Claim 133, said first apparatus further including user authentication hardware and/or software.
157. A system as in Claim 156, said user authentication hardware and/or software including biometric authentication hardware and/or software.
158. A system as in Claim 157, said biometric authentication hardware and/or software including hardware and/or software which analyzes palm prints, signatures, voices, fingerprints, retinas, irises and/or faces.
159. A system as in Claim 156, said user authentication hardware and/or software further including at least one secure identity token.
160. A system as in Claim 133, said memory storing a digital certificate.
161. A system as in Claim 160, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of at least one individual.
162. A system as in Claim 160, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of at least one group.

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163. A system as in Claim 160, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of said first apparatus.
164. A system as in Claim 160, said digital certificate including biometric information related to the identification of at least one individual.
165. A system as in Claim 160, said digital certificate being stored in a second secure container, said second secure container being stored in said memory.
166. A system as in Claim 165, said memory storing one or more rules associated with said second secure container, said second secure container rules at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital certificate.
167. A system as in Claim 160, said digital certificate being stored in said first secure container.
168. A system as in Claim 133, said memory storing at least one digital signature.
169. A system as in Claim 168, said digital signature being stored in a secure container.
170. A system as in Claim 169, said secure container including at least one cryptographic key.

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179. A system as in Claim 173, said seal including encoded information.
180. A system as in Claim 179, said encoded information being steganographically encoded in said seal.
181. A system as in Claim 173, said electronic seal including a digital signature.
182. A system as in Claim 173, said electronic seal including validation information.
183. A system as in Claim 173, said electronic seal including information regarding at least one transmission of said first secure container.
184. A system as in Claim 183, said transmission information including information regarding the transmitter of said first secure container.
185. A system as in Claim 173, said electronic seal including at least one rule.
186. A system as in Claim 185, said at least one electronic seal rule governing, at least in part, at least one aspect of access to or use of said first secure container contents.

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187. A system as in Claim 173, said electronic seal including a representation of at least one aspect of said first secure container contents.
188. A system as in Claim 187, said representation including a hash of at least a portion of said first secure container contents.
189. A system as in Claim 188, said hash constituting a hash of at least a portion of said video file after normalization of said portion.
190. A system as in Claim 188, said electronic seal further including a time value.
191. A system as in Claim 188, said electronic seal further including a certificate value obtained from a digital certificate.
192. A system as in Claim 173, said electronic seal including encrypted information.
193. A system as in Claim 192, said encrypted information being encrypted, at least in part, using a key from a public/private key pair.
194. A system as in Claim 193, said encryption key belonging to at least one individual or entity responsible at least in part for at least one transmission of said video file.

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195. A system as in Claim 173, said electronic seal further including at least one error correction code.
196. A system as in Claim 195, said error correction code being derived from at least a portion of said first secure container contents.
197. A system as in Claim 173, said electronic seal being stored in a secure container.
198. A system as in Claim 197, said secure container in which said electronic seal is stored being a second secure container, different from said first secure container.
199. A system as in Claim 198, said memory storing at least one rule at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said electronic seal.
200. A system as in Claim 173, said video file including at least one electronic seal.
201. A system as in Claim 200, said electronic seal being stored in said first secure container.
202. A system as in Claim 133, said memory storing at least one electronic fingerprint.

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203. A system as in Claim 202, said electronic fingerprint being stored in a secure container.
204. A system as in Claim 203, said secure container in which said electronic fingerprint is stored being a second secure container, different from said first secure container.
205. A system as in Claim 133, said first secure container containing at least one digital signature.
206. A system as in Claim 205, said memory storing at least one rule at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital signature.
207. A system as in Claim 133, said video file including steganographically encoded information.
208. A system as in Claim 207, said steganographically encoded information including at least one electronic fingerprint.
209. A system as in Claim 207, said steganographically encoded information including a first portion encoded using a first steganographic encoding technique and a second portion encoded using a second steganographic encoding technique.

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210. A system as in Claim 209, in which said first steganographic encoding technique provides a higher degree of security than said second steganographic encoding technique.
211. A system as in Claim 210, in which at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information is encrypted.
212. A system as in Claim 209, in which said first portion is encrypted using a first technique which differs in at least one respect from a second encryption technique used for encryption of said second portion.
213. A system as in Claim 212, in which said encryption techniques differ in at least the key used for each technique.
214. A system as in Claim 212, in which said encryption techniques differ in the strength of encryption used.
215. A system as in Claim 207, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in spacings between words or characters, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.
216. A system as in Claim 207, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in spacings between lines of text, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.

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tampering by a user of said apparatus, said protected processing environment including hardware and/or software used for applying said third rule and rules associated with secure containers in combination to at least in part govern at least one aspect of access to or use of said governed item; and

hardware and/or software used for transmission of secure containers to other apparatuses and/or for the receipt of secure containers from other apparatuses.

220. A system as in Claim 219, said system further including at least one electronic intermediary.
221. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary residing at said first apparatus.
222. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary being distributed between at least two locations, said two locations comprising said first apparatus and said second apparatus.
223. A system as in Claim 221, said first apparatus including a communications server at least in part facilitating communications between an internal network and a public network.
224. A system as in Claim 223, wherein said public network constitutes the internet.

225. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary constituting at least a portion of an apparatus operated by a communications service provider.
226. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary including digital signature hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow application of a digital signature to an item.
227. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary including hash hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow calculation of a hash value based on an item.
228. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary including electronic seal hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow application of a electronic seal to an item.
229. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary including audit trail hardware and/or software operatively connected to record and store audit information relating to an item.
230. A system as in Claim 229, in which said intermediary audit information includes information regarding at least one transmission of said item.
231. A system as in Claim 229, in which said intermediary audit information includes information regarding at least one access to said item.

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238. A system as in Claim 235, in which said authentication hardware and/or software is operatively connected to at least in part authenticate a recipient of a governed item and/or a site at which a governed item is received.
239. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary including auction hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide electronic auction services.
240. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary including transaction clearing hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide services relating to clearing transactions.
241. A system as in Claim 240, said transaction clearing services including payment-related services.
242. A system as in Claim 241, said transaction clearing services including audit-related services.
243. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary including certification hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide certification services.
244. A system as in Claim 243, said certification services including the creation of digital certificates.

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245. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary including currency hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide currency-related services.
246. A system as in Claim 245, said currency-related services including currency conversion.
247. A system as in Claim 220, said intermediary including a secure archive.
248. A system as in Claim 247, said secure archive including receipt-related information.
249. A system as in Claim 247, said secure archive including information about transmissions of one or more items.
250. A system as in Claim 247, said secure archive including identification information relating to one or more items.
251. A system as in Claim 247, said secure archive including authentication information relating to one or more items.
252. A system as in Claim 247, said secure archive authentication information including at least one hash value of at least a portion of an item.

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hardware and/or software used for transmission of secure containers to other apparatuses and/or for the receipt of secure containers from other apparatuses.

260. A system as in Claim 259, said first apparatus further including:  
a secure database.
261. A system as in Claim 260, said first apparatus further including:  
a rights operating system.

262. A system as in Claim 261, said first apparatus further including:  
node initialization hardware and/or software.
263. A system as in Claim 259, in which said first apparatus memory  
includes at least one rule associated with a group of users.
264. A system as in Claim 259, said first apparatus further including a card  
reader.
265. A system as in Claim 259, said first apparatus comprising a kiosk, said  
kiosk further including:  
a document reader;  
a camera;  
a microphone; and  
a speaker.
266. A system as in Claim 259, said first apparatus comprising a television  
set-top box.
267. A system as in Claim 259, said first apparatus comprising a network  
electronic delivery server.
268. A system as in Claim 259, said second rule at least in part governing  
the ability of a user of said first apparatus to transmit said image file to  
a second apparatus.

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269. A system as in Claim 268, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part governing the ability of a user to alter at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.
270. A system as in Claim 268, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part restricting the number of accesses and/or uses a user may make of at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.
271. A system as in Claim 268, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part restricting the duration of at least some accesses and/or uses of said image file.
272. A system as in Claim 259, said memory further storing audit information.
273. A system as in Claim 272, said audit information being stored in a second secure container.
274. A system as in Claim 259, said memory further storing at least one routing slip.
275. A system as in Claim 274, said routing slip including:  
information relating to identification of at least one recipient of at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.

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276. A system as in Claim 275, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part authorizing or allowing at least one action based at least in part on said routing slip identification information.
277. A system as in Claim 276, said at least one action including transmitting at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container to another apparatus and/or another user, said authorization of said transmission by said third rule being at least in part based on the identity of at least one prior recipient of said first secure container contents.
278. A system as in Claim 259, said first secure container having been received from a second apparatus and said second rule having been received from a third apparatus different from said second apparatus.
279. A system as in Claim 259, said memory further storing at least one audit trail record.
280. A system as in Claim 279, said audit trail record including information regarding the manner in which said first secure container and/or contents of said first secure container has been used.
281. A system as in Claim 279, said first apparatus including a signature apparatus, said signature apparatus including signature affixation hardware and/or software.

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282. A system as in Claim 259, said first apparatus further including user authentication hardware and/or software.
283. A system as in Claim 282, said user authentication hardware and/or software including biometric authentication hardware and/or software.
284. A system as in Claim 283, said biometric authentication hardware and/or software including hardware and/or software which analyzes palm prints, signatures, voices, fingerprints, retinas, irises and/or faces.
285. A system as in Claim 282, said user authentication hardware and/or software further including at least one secure identity token.
286. A system as in Claim 259, said memory storing a digital certificate.
287. A system as in Claim 286, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of at least one individual.
288. A system as in Claim 286, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of at least one group.
289. A system as in Claim 286, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of said first apparatus.
290. A system as in Claim 286, said digital certificate including biometric information related to the identification of at least one individual.

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291. A system as in Claim 286, said digital certificate being stored in a second secure container, said second secure container being stored in said memory.
292. A system as in Claim 291, said memory storing one or more rules associated with said second secure container, said second secure container rules at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital certificate.
293. A system as in Claim 286, said digital certificate being stored in said first secure container.
294. A system as in Claim 259, said memory storing at least one digital signature.
295. A system as in Claim 294, said digital signature being stored in a secure container.
296. A system as in Claim 295, said secure container including at least one cryptographic key.
297. A system as in Claim 296, said secure container in which said digital signature is stored being a second secure container, different from said first secure container.

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298. A system as in Claim 297, said memory storing at least one rule at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital signature.
299. A system as in Claim 259, said memory storing at least one electronic seal.
300. A system as in Claim 299, said electronic seal including a digital representation of a handwritten signature.
301. A system as in Claim 299, said electronic seal including receipt information.
302. A system as in Claim 299, said electronic seal including usage information.
303. A system as in Claim 302, said usage information including information at least in part identifying usage of said image file.
304. A system as in Claim 299, said electronic seal including at least one image designed to allow for visual recognition of said seal.
305. A system as in Claim 299, said seal including encoded information.
306. A system as in Claim 305, said encoded information being steganographically encoded in said seal.

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307. A system as in Claim 299, said electronic seal including a digital signature.
308. A system as in Claim 299, said electronic seal including validation information.
309. A system as in Claim 299, said electronic seal including information regarding at least one transmission of said first secure container.
310. A system as in Claim 309, said transmission information including information regarding the transmitter of said first secure container.
311. A system as in Claim 299, said electronic seal including at least one rule.
312. A system as in Claim 311, said at least one electronic seal rule governing, at least in part, at least one aspect of access to or use of said first secure container contents.
313. A system as in Claim 299, said electronic seal including a representation of at least one aspect of said first secure container contents.
314. A system as in Claim 313, said representation including a hash of at least a portion of said first secure container contents.

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323. A system as in Claim 299, said electronic seal being stored in a secure container.
324. A system as in Claim 323, said secure container in which said electronic seal is stored being a second secure container, different from said first secure container.
325. A system as in Claim 324, said memory storing at least one rule at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said electronic seal.
326. A system as in Claim 299, said image file including at least one electronic seal.
327. A system as in Claim 326, said electronic seal being stored in said first secure container.
328. A system as in Claim 259, said memory storing at least one electronic fingerprint.
329. A system as in Claim 328, said electronic fingerprint being stored in a secure container.
330. A system as in Claim 329, said secure container in which said electronic fingerprint is stored being a second secure container, different from said first secure container.

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331. A system as in Claim 259, said first secure container containing at least one digital signature.
332. A system as in Claim 331, said memory storing at least one rule at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital signature.
333. A system as in Claim 259, said image file including steganographically encoded information.
334. A system as in Claim 333, said steganographically encoded information including at least one electronic fingerprint.
335. A system as in Claim 333, said steganographically encoded information including a first portion encoded using a first steganographic encoding technique and a second portion encoded using a second steganographic encoding technique.
336. A system as in Claim 335, in which said first steganographic encoding technique provides a higher degree of security than said second steganographic encoding technique.
337. A system as in Claim 336, in which at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information is encrypted.

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338. A system as in Claim 335, in which said first portion is encrypted using a first technique which differs in at least one respect from a second encryption technique used for encryption of said second portion.
339. A system as in Claim 338, in which said encryption techniques differ in at least the key used for each technique.
340. A system as in Claim 338, in which said encryption techniques differ in the strength of encryption used.
341. A system as in Claim 333, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in spacings between words or characters, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.
342. A system as in Claim 333, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in spacings between lines of text, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.
343. A system as in Claim 333, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in the gray scale used in at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.

344. A system as in Claim 333, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in the color frequencies used in at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.

345. A system as in Claim 259, said system further including a second apparatus, said second apparatus including:

user controls,

a communications port,

a processor,

a memory containing a third rule,

hardware and or/software used for receiving and opening secure

containers,

said secure containers each including the capacity to contain at least one governed item,

at least one rule being associated with each of said secure containers,

a protected processing environment at least in part protecting at least some information contained in said protected processing environment from tampering by a user of said apparatus, said protected processing environment including hardware and/or software used for applying said third

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rule and rules associated with secure containers in combination to at least in part govern at least one aspect of access to or use of said governed item, and

hardware and/or software used for transmission of secure containers to other apparatuses and/or for the receipt of secure containers from other apparatuses.

346. A system as in Claim 345, said system further including at least one electronic intermediary.
347. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary residing at said first apparatus.
348. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary being distributed between at least two locations, said two locations comprising said first apparatus and said second apparatus.
349. A system as in Claim 347, said first apparatus including a communications server at least in part facilitating communications between an internal network and a public network.
350. A system as in Claim 349, wherein said public network constitutes the internet.

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351. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary constituting at least a portion of an apparatus operated by a communications service provider.
352. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including digital signature hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow application of a digital signature to an item.
353. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including hash hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow calculation of a hash value based on an item.
354. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including electronic seal hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow application of a electronic seal to an item.
355. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including audit trail hardware and/or software operatively connected to record and store audit information relating to an item.
356. A system as in Claim 355, in which said intermediary audit information includes information regarding at least one transmission of said item.
357. A system as in Claim 355, in which said intermediary audit information includes information regarding at least one access to said item.

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358. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including time stamp hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide time information.
359. A system as in Claim 358, said intermediary including time certification hardware and/or software operatively connected to said time stamp hardware and/or software, said time certification including certification of time of transmission, receipt and/or use of an item.
360. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including auditing hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide auditing services.
361. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including authentication hardware and/or software.
362. A system as in Claim 361, in which said authentication hardware and/or software is operatively connected to at least in part authenticate governed items..
363. A system as in Claim 361, in which said authentication hardware and/or software is operatively connected to at least in part authenticate a sender of a governed item and/or a site responsible for sending a governed item.

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364. A system as in Claim 361, in which said authentication hardware and/or software is operatively connected to at least in part authenticate a recipient of a governed item and/or a site at which a governed item is received.
365. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including auction hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide electronic auction services.
366. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including transaction clearing hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide services relating to clearing transactions.
367. A system as in Claim 366, said transaction clearing services including payment-related services.
368. A system as in Claim 367, said transaction clearing services including audit-related services.
369. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including certification hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide certification services.
370. A system as in Claim 369, said certification services including the creation of digital certificates.

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371. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including currency hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide currency-related services.
372. A system as in Claim 371, said currency-related services including currency conversion.
373. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including a secure archive.
374. A system as in Claim 373, said secure archive including receipt-related information.
375. A system as in Claim 373, said secure archive including information about transmissions of one or more items.
376. A system as in Claim 373, said secure archive including identification information relating to one or more items.
377. A system as in Claim 373, said secure archive including authentication information relating to one or more items.
378. A system as in Claim 373, said secure archive authentication information including at least one hash value of at least a portion of an item.

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379. A system as in Claim 373, said secure archive including information relating to one or more controls.
380. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including transmission hardware and/or software operatively connected to receive items from other apparatuses and to transmit items to other apparatuses.
381. A system as in Claim 380, said transmission hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide store and forward services.
382. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including cryptographic key repository hardware and/or software operatively connected to maintain a repository of cryptographic keys.
383. A system as in Claim 346, said intermediary including a user rights authority clearinghouse.
384. A system as in Claim 383, said user rights authority clearinghouse operatively connected to make rights available to users.
385. A system including:  
a first apparatus including,  
user controls,  
a communications port,  
a processor,  
a memory containing  
a first rule, and

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a first secure container containing a text file, the first secure container having associated a second rule, the second rule governing, at least in part, access to or other use of at least a portion of the text file;

hardware and/or software used for receiving and opening secure containers, said secure containers each including the capacity to contain at least one governed item, at least one rule being associated with each of said secure containers;

a protected processing environment at least in part protecting at least some information contained in said protected processing environment from tampering by a user of said first apparatus, said protected processing environment including hardware and/or software used for applying said first rule and said second rule in combination to at least in part govern at least one aspect of access to or use of said text file; and

hardware and/or software used for transmission of secure containers to other apparatuses and/or for the receipt of secure containers from other apparatuses.

386. A system as in Claim 385, said first apparatus further including:  
a secure database.

387. A system as in Claim 386, said first apparatus further including:  
a rights operating system.

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388. A system as in Claim 387, said first apparatus further including:  
node initialization hardware and/or software.
389. A system as in Claim 385, in which said first apparatus memory  
includes at least one rule associated with a group of users.
390. A system as in Claim 385, said first apparatus further including a card  
reader.
391. A system as in Claim 385, said first apparatus comprising a kiosk, said  
kiosk further including:  
a document reader;  
a camera;  
a microphone; and  
a speaker.
392. A system as in Claim 385, said first apparatus comprising a television  
set-top box.
393. A system as in Claim 385, said first apparatus comprising a network  
electronic delivery server.
394. A system as in Claim 385, said second rule at least in part governing  
the ability of a user of said first apparatus to transmit said text file to a  
second apparatus.

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395. A system as in Claim 394, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part governing the ability of a user to alter at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.
396. A system as in Claim 394, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part restricting the number of accesses and/or uses a user may make of at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.
397. A system as in Claim 394, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part restricting the duration of at least some accesses and/or uses of said text file.
398. A system as in Claim 385, said memory further storing audit information.
399. A system as in Claim 398, said audit information being stored in a second secure container.
400. A system as in Claim 385, said memory further storing at least one routing slip.
401. A system as in Claim 400, said routing slip including:  
information relating to identification of at least one recipient of at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container.

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402. A system as in Claim 401, said first secure container having associated a third rule at least in part authorizing or allowing at least one action based at least in part on said routing slip identification information.
403. A system as in Claim 402, said at least one action including transmitting at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container to another apparatus and/or another user, said authorization of said transmission by said third rule being at least in part based on the identity of at least one prior recipient of said first secure container contents.
404. A system as in Claim 403, said first secure container having been received from a second apparatus and said second rule having been received from a third apparatus different from said second apparatus.
405. A system as in Claim 403, said memory further storing at least one audit trail record.
406. A system as in Claim 405, said audit trail record including information regarding the manner in which said first secure container and/or contents of said first secure container has been used.
407. A system as in Claim 403, said first apparatus including a signature apparatus, said signature apparatus including signature affixation hardware and/or software.

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408. A system as in Claim 403, said first apparatus further including user authentication hardware and/or software.
409. A system as in Claim 408, said user authentication hardware and/or software including biometric authentication hardware and/or software.
410. A system as in Claim 409, said biometric authentication hardware and/or software including hardware and/or software which analyzes palm prints, signatures, voices, fingerprints, retinas, irises and/or faces.
411. A system as in Claim 408, said user authentication hardware and/or software further including at least one secure identity token.
412. A system as in Claim 403, said memory storing a digital certificate.
413. A system as in Claim 412, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of at least one individual.
414. A system as in Claim 412, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of at least one group.
415. A system as in Claim 412, said digital certificate including information relating to the identification of said first apparatus.
416. A system as in Claim 412, said digital certificate including biometric information related to the identification of at least one individual.

417. A system as in Claim 412, said digital certificate being stored in a second secure container, said second secure container being stored in said memory.
418. A system as in Claim 417, said memory storing one or more rules associated with said second secure container, said second secure container rules at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital certificate.
419. A system as in Claim 412, said digital certificate being stored in said first secure container.
420. A system as in Claim 403, said memory storing at least one digital signature.
421. A system as in Claim 420, said digital signature being stored in a secure container.
422. A system as in Claim 421, said secure container including at least one cryptographic key.
423. A system as in Claim 422, said secure container in which said digital signature is stored being a second secure container, different from said first secure container.

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424. A system as in Claim 423, said memory storing at least one rule at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital signature.
425. A system as in Claim 403, said memory storing at least one electronic seal.
426. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal including a digital representation of a handwritten signature.
427. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal including receipt information.
428. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal including usage information.
429. A system as in Claim 428, said usage information including information at least in part identifying usage of said text file.
430. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal including at least one image designed to allow for visual recognition of said seal.
431. A system as in Claim 425, said seal including encoded information.
432. A system as in Claim 431, said encoded information being steganographically encoded in said seal.

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433. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal including a digital signature.
434. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal including validation information.
435. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal including information regarding at least one transmission of said first secure container.
436. A system as in Claim 435, said transmission information including information regarding the transmitter of said first secure container.
437. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal including at least one rule.
438. A system as in Claim 437, said at least one electronic seal rule governing, at least in part, at least one aspect of access to or use of said first secure container contents.
439. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal including a representation of at least one aspect of said first secure container contents.
440. A system as in Claim 439, said representation including a hash of at least a portion of said first secure container contents.

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441. A system as in Claim 440, said hash constituting a hash of at least a portion of said text file after normalization of said portion.
442. A system as in Claim 440, said electronic seal further including a time value.
443. A system as in Claim 440, said electronic seal further including a certificate value obtained from a digital certificate.
444. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal including encrypted information.
445. A system as in Claim 444, said encrypted information being encrypted, at least in part, using a key from a public/private key pair.
446. A system as in Claim 445, said encryption key belonging to at least one individual or entity responsible at least in part for at least one transmission of said text file.
447. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal further including at least one error correction code.
448. A system as in Claim 447, said error correction code being derived from at least a portion of said first secure container contents.

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449. A system as in Claim 425, said electronic seal being stored in a secure container.
450. A system as in Claim 449, said secure container in which said electronic seal is stored being a second secure container, different from said first secure container.
451. A system as in Claim 450, said memory storing at least one rule at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said electronic seal.
452. A system as in Claim 425, said text file including at least one electronic seal.
453. A system as in Claim 452, said electronic seal being stored in said first secure container.
454. A system as in Claim 403, said memory storing at least one electronic fingerprint.
455. A system as in Claim 454, said electronic fingerprint being stored in a secure container.
456. A system as in Claim 455, said secure container in which said electronic fingerprint is stored being a second secure container, different from said first secure container.

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457. A system as in Claim 403, said first secure container containing at least one digital signature.
458. A system as in Claim 457, said memory storing at least one rule at least in part governing at least one aspect of access to or use of said digital signature.
459. A system as in Claim 403, said text file including steganographically encoded information.
460. A system as in Claim 459, said steganographically encoded information including at least one electronic fingerprint.
461. A system as in Claim 459, said steganographically encoded information including a first portion encoded using a first steganographic encoding technique and a second portion encoded using a second steganographic encoding technique.
462. A system as in Claim 461, in which said first steganographic encoding technique provides a higher degree of security than said second steganographic encoding technique.
463. A system as in Claim 462, in which at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information is encrypted.

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464. A system as in Claim 461, in which said first portion is encrypted using a first technique which differs in at least one respect from a second encryption technique used for encryption of said second portion.
465. A system as in Claim 464, in which said encryption techniques differ in at least the key used for each technique.
466. A system as in Claim 464, in which said encryption techniques differ in the strength of encryption used.
467. A system as in Claim 459, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in spacings between words or characters, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.
468. A system as in Claim 459, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in spacings between lines of text, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.
469. A system as in Claim 459, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in the gray scale used in at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.

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470. A system as in Claim 459, in which said steganographic encoding includes at least the creation of slight variances in the color frequencies used in at least a portion of the contents of said first secure container, said slight variances encoding at least a portion of said steganographically encoded information.

471. A system as in Claim 403, said system further including a second apparatus, said second apparatus including:

user controls,

a communications port,

a processor,

a memory containing a third rule,

hardware and or/software used for receiving and opening secure

containers,

said secure containers each including the capacity to contain at least one governed item,

at least one rule being associated with each of said secure containers,

a protected processing environment at least in part protecting at least some information contained in said protected processing environment from tampering by a user of said apparatus, said protected processing environment including hardware and/or software used for applying said third

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477. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary constituting at least a portion of an apparatus operated by a communications service provider.
478. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including digital signature hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow application of a digital signature to an item.
479. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including hash hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow calculation of a hash value based on an item.
480. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including electronic seal hardware and/or software operatively connected to allow application of a electronic seal to an item.
481. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including audit trail hardware and/or software operatively connected to record and store audit information relating to an item.
482. A system as in Claim 481, in which said intermediary audit information includes information regarding at least one transmission of said item.
483. A system as in Claim 481, in which said intermediary audit information includes information regarding at least one access to said item.



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490. A system as in Claim 487, in which said authentication hardware and/or software is operatively connected to at least in part authenticate a recipient of a governed item and/or a site at which a governed item is received.
491. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including auction hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide electronic auction services.
492. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including transaction clearing hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide services relating to clearing transactions.
493. A system as in Claim 492, said transaction clearing services including payment-related services.
494. A system as in Claim 493, said transaction clearing services including audit-related services.
495. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including certification hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide certification services.
496. A system as in Claim 495, said certification services including the creation of digital certificates.

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497. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including currency hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide currency-related services.
498. A system as in Claim 497, said currency-related services including currency conversion.
499. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including a secure archive.
500. A system as in Claim 499, said secure archive including receipt-related information.
501. A system as in Claim 499, said secure archive including information about transmissions of one or more items.
502. A system as in Claim 499, said secure archive including identification information relating to one or more items.
503. A system as in Claim 499, said secure archive including authentication information relating to one or more items.
504. A system as in Claim 499, said secure archive authentication information including at least one hash value of at least a portion of an item.

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505. A system as in Claim 499, said secure archive including information relating to one or more controls.
506. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including transmission hardware and/or software operatively connected to receive items from other apparatuses and to transmit items to other apparatuses.
507. A system as in Claim 506, said transmission hardware and/or software operatively connected to provide store and forward services.
508. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including cryptographic key repository hardware and/or software operatively connected to maintain a repository of cryptographic keys.
509. A system as in Claim 472, said intermediary including a user rights authority clearinghouse.
510. A system as in Claim 509, said user rights authority clearinghouse operatively connected to make rights available to users.

**Remarks**

The present application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Appln. No. 09/221,479, filed December 28, 1998, as a continuation of U.S. Patent Appln. No. 08/699,711, filed August 12, 1996, as a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Appln. No. 08/388,107, filed February 13, 1995.